

Message Text

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SUBJ: DEFENSE MINISTER AVEROFF COMMENTS ON LOCKHEED INQUIRY
IN CBS-TV INTERVIEW

REF STATE 054193 (NOTAL)

1. MINISTER OF DEFENSE AVEROFF GAVE INTERVIEW TO CBS-TV SATURDAY MORNING MARCH 6 WHICH HIT THE GREEK PRESS MARCH 10. IN THE INTERVIEW, AVEROFF ANSWERED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE LOCKHEED AFFAIR AS IT RELATED TO GREECE. HE VERIFIED THAT THE GOG HAD ORDERED AN INQUIRY INTO THE AFFAIR, WHICH IS BEING CONDUCTED BY A SENIOR MILITARY OFFICER, AND THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS CONFRONTING THE MATTER BOTH SERIOUSLY AND WITH OBJECTIVITY. PRIOR TO THE CONCLUSION OF THIS INQUIRY, AVEROFF STATED HE WAS UNWILLING TO COMMENT EITHER AS TO HOW HE FELT ABOUT THE CASE FROM THE GREEK STANDPOINT, OR WHAT HIS OPINION MIGHT BE OF GREEK OFFICIALS WHO HAD HANDLED LOCKHEED CONTRACTS.

2. HOWEVER, HE DID REMARK THAT HE CONSIDERED THE HANDLING OF THE MATTER ON THE AMERICAN SIDE AS "UNACCEPTABLE AND IMMORAL". (COMMENT: IT SEEMS
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APPARENT THAT AVEROFF ON MARCH 6 HAD NOT YET

LEARNED OF THE STATEMENT MADE BY DEPUTY SECRETARY INGERSOLL BEFORE THE PROXMIRE SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE (REFTEL). HIS CRITICISM SEEMS TO BE DIRECTED AT PRESS REPORTS OF LEAKS FROM A SENATE COMMITTEE THAT A GREEK GENERAL (UNNAMED) WAS INVOLVED IN THE LOCKHEED PAYOFFS AND THE FAILURE OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE TO BE MORE RESPONSIVE TO EARLIER GREEK REQUESTS. WE GAVE COPIES OF THE TEXT OF THE DEPUTY SECRETARY'S STATEMENT TO FOREIGN MINISTER BITSIOS AND OTHERS IN THE GOG THE EVENING OF MARCH 5.) HE ARGUED THAT SUCH A CHARACTERIZATION IS CALLED FOR IN LIGHT OF THE FACT THAT THE U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE HAD GIVEN NO REPLY TO EARLIER GREEK DEMARCHES -- BOTH ORAL AND WRITTEN -- WHICH ASKED THE COMMITTEE TO PROVIDE CONCRETE INFORMATION INCLUDING SUCH ELEMENTS AS NAMES AND AMOUNTS. HE ASSERTED THAT GREEKS EITHER SHOULD NOT BE MENTIONED AT ALL WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE LOCKHEED INQUIRY OR THEY SHOULD BE MENTIONED BY NAME. THE FLINGING OUT, HOWEVER, OF A GENERAL SUSPICION WITHOUT EITHER FOUNDATION OR SPECIFICITY IS ENTIRELY UNACCEPTABLE, HE SAID. AVEROFF THEN REQUESTED THE SENATE COMMITTEE --THROUGH HIS INTERVIEW ON AMERICAN TELEVISION, TO PROVIDE SUCH CONCRETE ELEMENTS. HE EXPLAINED THAT, IN GREECE, HONOR IS PLACED ABOVE EVERYTHING ELSE. ACCORDINGLY, HE PLEDGED AS DEFENSE MINISTER HE WOULD PUNISH SEVERELY ANY OFFICER VIOLATING HIS DUTY, BUT AT THE SAME TIME HE WOULD PROTECT THE HONOR OF THE GREAT NUMBER OF OFFICERS WHO ARE BEING UNJUSTLY AFFECTED BY GENERALIZED CHARGES.

3. THE ATHENS PRESS COVERAGE OF THE AVEROFF INTERVIEW BEGAN MARCH 10. THE MORNING PRESS GENERALLY FEATURED THE STORY AS FRONT PAGE NEWS WITH BOTH ACROPOLIS (CONSERVATIVE, PRO-GOVERNMENT) AND TO VIMA (LIBERAL, OPPOSITION) HIGHLIGHTING THE DEFENSE MINISTER'S STATEMENT THAT AMERICAN HANDLING OF THE LOCKHEED AFFAIR WAS "UNACCEPTABLE AND IMMORAL". KATHIMERINI (PRO-GOVERNMENT) FOR ITS PART STRESSED ANOTHER ASPECT OF THE AVEROFF CBS INTERVIEW, I.E. HIS BELIEF THAT WAR WITH TURKEY IS NOT LIKELY. ELEFTHEROS COSMOS (RIGHT WING) CARRIED SEPARATE STORIES ON AVEROFF'S REMARKS ABOUT

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THE LOCKHEED ISSUE AND ON GREEK-TURKISH RELATIONS. THE AFTERNOON PAPERS MARCH 10 FOR THE MOST PART CARRY THE STORY IN A SIMILAR MANNER BUT WITH SLIGHTLY LESS PROMINENCE. AN EXCEPTION IS ELEFTHEROTYPIA (LEFT-OF-CENTER, ANTI-U.S.) WHICH PLAYED THE REPORT AS ITS MAIN FRONT PAGE STORY UNDER THE TITLE "I CHALLENGE THE SENATE". THAT STORY COMMENTED THAT AVEROFF USED ROUGH LANGUAGE FOR THE FIRST TIME TOWARDS THE AMERICANS.

5. TO DATE, NO EDITORIALS HAVE APPEARED ON THE SUBJECT
BUT IT IS POSSIBLE THAT TOMORROW'S PAPERS, AND ESPECIALLY THE
COMMUNIST ONES WHICH TODAY HAVE BEEN RELATIVELY SILENT ON
THE MATTER, MIGHT PLAY UP THE THEME AS AN
ATTEMPT BY THE USG TO COVER UP THE LOCKHEED MATTER AND
WITHHOLD COOPERATION FROM THE GREEK AUTHORITIES.
KUBISCH

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